

Lawton prescription discount program

Written by Jacob Russell - Lawton Constitution
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The city of Lawton announced the launch of a prescription drug program designed to relieve the burden of escalating prescription drug costs on Lawtonians, during a news conference at the Comanche County Health Department.

“The program benefits our residents,” said City Manager Larry Mitchell. “It will help citizens ... it will widen their ability to pay for living expenses. Our residents will take advantage of this.”

The program offers coverage for prescription drugs to the entire community — regardless of age, income or current health coverage, including a number of pet medications. On average, participants in the program received 20 percent off the retail cost of prescription drugs. It is not, however, an insurance plan and is only meant to be used to cover costs of drugs for individuals and families that are not covered by existing insurance plans. It will also allow for Medicare recipients to use the card to purchase name brand drugs that may not be covered by their plan, said Lawton Mayor Fred Fitch.

Residents can access the discount plan by picking up a free prescription discount card at the listed locations while current supplies last.

“We were sent 10,000 to rollout,” said Jim Russell, interim director of human resources for the city of Lawton. “It

will cover 10 percent of the population, but we can order more as needed.”

If supplies do run out, cards may also be printed off of the provider’s Web site, at [www . car](http://www.car)

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, Fitch said. Each card has an identification number that is unique to the card holder, Russell said. The services can be activated by calling the toll-free number listed on the back of the card upon picking it up. To use the card, participants simply need to show it on their trip to the pharmacy. After the first visit, their identification code can be entered into the system, allowing card holders to only need to show the card from then on. Card holders will also be privilege to resource information and news on previously mentioned Caremark Web site.

In addition to participating p h a r m a - c i e s in Southwest Oklahoma, card holders will also be able to receive discounted prices at 60,000 pharmacies nationwide, including the major chains — CVS, Walgreens, Wal-Mart and KMart.

With many residents still struggling to cope with the economy, the discount program could not have come at a better time, said Keith Reed, administrative director of the Comanche County Health Department.

“Oklahoma is ranked 34th in the number of uninsured,” Reed said. “We are excited to support the city and this endeavor to help citizens get the medications they need.”

Fitch, a former business owner, said he is urging business owners around the community who cannot match benefit packages to employees from larger companies to make sure their employees are aware of this program and its opportunities.

“Be sure each employee gets this,” he said. “It will make for one satisfied employee.”

Another selling point to Mitchell and Fitch was the fact that the program is offered to cities free of charge, something that can sound too good to be true in a time when the city budget has

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taken a substantial hit.

“We have watched it for a year and a half and have not seen any problems with it,” Mitchell said.

The discount drug program was made available to Lawton through a collaboration by the National League of Cities (NLC) and CVS Caremark, who began the nationwide program in January 2009. Lawton first heard about the program at the NLC annual meeting last year and decided to closely follow the success of Ardmore, who implemented the program when it first began in January. To date, Ardmore residents have saved approximately \$90,883, ranking them third in the top 10 of program cities in savings to residents.

“We have talked to Ardmore,” Mitchell said. “They have a population of around 25,000. We feel that Lawton can match or surpass that (savings to residents).”

For more information, visit [www . nlc . org / pre scriptioncard](http://www.nlc.org/precriptioncard) , or care mark . com / nlc .